

Hoosier Folklore

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MARCH, 1946

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FOREWORD

By STITH THOMPSON

It is a happy moment for the cause of folklore in Indiana and its neighboring states when the Hoosier Folklore Society and the Indiana Historical Bureau join forces for the publication of *Hoosier Folklore*. The relationship of folklore studies and history in our state was recognized years ago when the Indiana Historical Commission published Miss Leah Wolford's *The Play-Party in Indiana*, the pioneer publication in its field. Though many years have passed without further publication of folklore material, the Indiana Historical Bureau and the Indiana Historical Society have increasingly recognized the historical value of folk traditions. The sponsorship of *Hoosier Folklore* comes as a natural and logical step in this important relationship.

Even in its mimeographed form, the *Hoosier Folklore Bulletin* has served to maintain interest in folk-tradition within the state and to relate it to that of the rest of the world. Though its circulation has never been large, it has reached most of the folklore libraries and scholars throughout the world and has been so frequently referred to that its usefulness is everywhere recognized.

In its new and more convenient form and with its publication under the sponsorship of the Indiana Historical Bureau, the journal should facilitate the work of the Hoosier Folklore Society and enlist more and more workers in the interesting task of collecting and studying our folklore.

A knowledge and appreciation of the traditions of a state is essential to any understanding of the thoughts of its people either now or in times past. Besides the political and social history of the state in former generations, there are old songs, legends, illogical beliefs and practices existing precariously in the memories of the aged or occasionally preserved in old

papers or documents. These survivals help give us a truer picture of the life of our ancestors, in many ways so far removed from our own ways of thinking and acting.

But folk tradition is not all a mere recollection of something that is dead. Tradition still plays a mighty role in our lives and in its many daily manifestations, in children's games, in new cycles of stories that come to circulate in mysterious ways, in new superstitions and revivals of old, is of continual interest not only to the collector who observes and records them but to the student who sees how they fit into the pattern of traditions in other places and other times.

One aspect of the folklore of Indiana remains largely for future study since so little has thus far been done. This has to do with the European groups who have come into the state within the last century. These may be essentially rural, like the Swiss around Vevay or the Germans in the southwestern counties, but for the most part, they live in our great cities, in Indianapolis or the large manufacturing centers of Lake County. Frequently these groups maintain their organizations which keep alive the songs, dances, customs, and beliefs which they have brought with them from abroad. The way in which similar groups have been studied in such a city as Detroit to the mutual advantage of the community at large and of these groups themselves will show at least one direction in which the future may profitably engage the labors of our folklorists.

To these and to all other efforts for the preservation and study of the lore of our people, may *Hoosier Folklore* serve as a guide and a continuing encouragement.

Indiana University

Bloomington, Indiana

A THRESHING RING IN SOUTHERN OHIO

By WILLIAM MARION MILLER

The threshing ring, which from the early days of the steam threshing outfit until the advent of the combine was doubtless the most striking example of continuous community effort in the wheat-farming areas, has become in the last quarter century of less and less importance in the life of the small farmer. For more than fifty years it was the most highly socialized aspect of the work life of the farmer in many areas, surpassing in importance and duration of time other communal aspects of farm life, such as butchering, husking bees, hay and straw baling, clover hulling, barn raisings, etc. Now in many regions the ring scarcely exists, and if it lives on at all it is on a highly modified scale—a shadowy phantom of its former robust self.

As a boy on a farm in southwestern Ohio, I grew up in the last years of the ring's glory, just before modern methods brought about its decline. It is one more folkway that is slipping from the scene of American life; hence it might not be amiss to record the story of the ring I knew so well. Its history, I am sure, is typical of that of countless other rings of the Middle West.

This ring was formed in the late sixties; my paternal great-grandfather was one of its founders, and three generations since have belonged to it, my brother representing the fourth. The farms included in it stretched along three roads forming a U, the top of which was formed by the old Miami and Erie canal. This unit held together consistently over the years, and in the latter years stretched out about half a mile along two other roads that lay adjacent to include three or four other farms that could not be served by other threshing outfits. The original group along the U consisted of thirteen farms, ranging in size from sixty to one hundred sixty acres. It was a fairly flexible and highly democratic organization in which a fine spirit of loyalty usually existed; now and then some disgruntled member might desert the group for a year or two, but he usually found his way back into the fold.

Ring activity started in the late winter or early spring. The first job was to "organize" and choose the thresher. I

never quite figured out how the men decided to get together and where to meet, but the word got around somehow or other that there would be a meeting of the ring on such and such a night at somebody's house—the place usually varied from year to year. The meeting was strictly a stag affair attended only by the heads of the houses; sometimes an older son went along to observe and listen.

What was discussed at this meeting? First, the choice of the thresher. This was highly important and often led to long debate and sometimes to acrimonious references to personalities. What sort of person was the thresher? Was he dependable and honest, not given to weighing "short" bushels and similar skulduggery, addicted to drink or sober, careless or careful about sparks from the engine—in itself an important consideration? Were his assistants and hired help rowdies and loafers? Did he get up early and get steam up in time for an early start? Did he live close enough to go home at night, or did he and his crew have to be provided with food and lodging for the night? Was his rig new or old, modern or antiquated, large or small, in good repair or bad condition? Did it thresh cleanly and not "throw over" grain—i. e. blow it out with the straw? Was his "mechanic" (the man in charge of the separator) skillful? Could he build a good stack? All these questions and many more had to be weighed and answered before a decision could be reached.

Should they employ a large or small rig? This was important and bore a close relationship to the man-power and team-power available. Some held to one or the other, but usually a machine capable of threshing at least one thousand bushels a day was engaged. The price per bushel usually did not enter into the discussion; it had been set earlier by the owners of rigs themselves. The farmer usually boarded the men who ran the outfit while it was at his farm and provided coal and water for the engine while it was threshing at his farm and enough fuel to carry it to the next farm. Now and then a thresher-operator would be accused of loading on more coal than was necessary for the "move" and then taking it home later on to add to his own fuel pile for the winter.

Another point considered was how many rings the operator worked, and when he would be available. This was highly important, especially if the season were rainy. As I recall we did not look with favor on an operator who worked more

than two other rings the size of ours. Usually a verbal promise was given as to the exact or approximate date of starting our job. A written contract simply did not exist.

Another question was the exchange of help. How much man-power and team-power should a man with twenty acres of wheat supply as compared to a farmer with fifty or sixty? Sometimes a cash difference was paid, but usually a man with a half-day's job supplied one man with a team and one extra man, while a man with a day's job supplied twice that amount. No one job in our ring lasted more than a day unless it rained or a serious breakdown stopped the work.

Until the early twenties there was no question of feeding or not feeding the whole threshing crew, which would often consist of forty or fifty men. They ate dinner or supper, or both, at the farm where they were threshing. But even this led once in a while to a delicate question or even hard feelings between neighbors. Suppose one job was finished in mid-morning or mid-afternoon; should the hungry crew move on to the next farm and work an hour or two, or wait for dinner where they had just finished the job? A sort of gentleman's agreement was usually reached or tacitly understood; if the rig pulled away before ten-thirty or before three-thirty the meal was on the next farmer. Here two questions were in conflict—was it better to rush on with the job and not lose time waiting for dinner, or was it fair to the housewife at whose farm home the job ended in mid-morning or mid-afternoon to be “put on for a meal”? The answer was largely conditioned by whose foot was being pinched, I am afraid.

A natural parallel to this delicate question was this: Suppose rain came up and stopped the threshing in mid-morning or mid-afternoon, or suppose the machine broke down at the same inconvenient times? Should the men go home to eat, or eat at the farm where the work had been interrupted? I am afraid that a satisfactory formula was never evolved to settle these points. The farmer—and especially the farmer's wife—was afraid of acquiring a reputation for “smallness” by refusing to feed the hungry men and yet did not want to go to the expense involved in preparing a big meal.

The matter of where the threshing started never troubled our ring—at one end one year, at the other the next. A newcomer to the ring was threshed last the first year, and after that took his regular turn. Now and then there would be a

difference of opinion as to where the threshing started the year before, but recalling incidents usually cleared up the point. Where the work started never bothered our family—our farm was in the middle of the ring.

The preliminary details once out of the way and the operator engaged, all we did was to wait until the grain was ready to thresh. Sometimes there was some chaffing about the delay, and woe to the owner of a rig who took on an extra ring and thereby delayed our jobs. Once or twice a free-lance operator was called in to replace a man who broke his word, but usually we waited for him but did not hire him again. No written contracts ever existed to the best of my knowledge, but the verbal ones held remarkably well. An operator who helped out another operator beset by sickness was never called to account for the delay, although there might be some grumbling.

Living in a valley surrounded by rolling hills, we could see the smoke of other rings that started the job before we did, and stories drifted in about certain rings being started, half-done, or completely threshed out. All this put us on edge, and there was considerable haste in finishing up the haying and tying up sundry loose ends before the most festive part of the year's work began. Then one day the farmer who was to thresh first came in to tell us that the work would start at his place on such and such a day. Then the big hay-wagon was put in order, the brake checked, the wheels greased, the horses shod if necessary, and the harness mended and greased. Family pride compelled us to put our best foot forward, for we knew that in some degree we would be judged by the appearance of our wagon and team. I might add that the team was chosen for its tractability and lack of fear of the engine and separator. A skittish or runaway team could cause a serious accident.

The first visible indication on the roads that the work in our ring was under way was the sight of wagons on their way to the job. Some rivalry existed about getting the first load up to the machine; but, since the honor was held for years by a confirmed early riser, no one seemed to want to wrest it from him. There was, however, a keen desire to do one's full share and to deliver as many loads to the separator as any other man. Since loads went up in rotation, this matter usually took care of itself and balanced out at the

end of the ring if not on every individual job. Now and then some one would put on a "shyster" load of sheaves, but ridicule put an end to that in a hurry. Savants of a later day would have called this social pressure, but of that we knew nothing. We did know, however, the difference between a lazy man and a hard worker and how to bring the former into line if necessary.

Usually the rig pulled in the night before if possible and "set." This was a highly important operation demanding considerable skill on the part of the engineer. The "set" was determined by the location of the farm buildings, how much straw was left in the stack from last year, and the direction of the wind. There was usually a dusty and a clean side of the separator, and the men tried to avoid the former.

With much puffing the big red separator was pushed or pulled into place and leveled, and then the engineer lined up the traction engine with it. He drew back some distance and then, sighting over the flywheel of the engine, lined up the belt to the separator. A skillful engineer could do this in one attempt; a clumsy one would require several.

The wagons were in the field as early as seven o'clock, if the dew permitted, and usually were ready to unload at the separator an hour later. A loud blast from the engine's whistle as soon as steam was up—usually about six o'clock—had already called the farmers to the job, and another one announced that threshing for the day was actually to start. By this time all the men were at their places, the sacks neatly piled, and the grain wagon manned and waiting. The engine started to puff, the big belt snapped noisily over the pulley, the separator started to rattle, but soon settled down into a steady hum.

It might be well to comment briefly on the division of labor and the assignment of tasks. Each man was boss on his own farm, and all respected his authority even though they might not agree with the way that things were being done. We usually had about fifteen teams and as many pitchers or loaders in the field, two men at the sacker, and four or five on the grain wagon. In earlier days before the advent of the automatic feeder two men served as band-cutters—a particularly dangerous job—for one had to cut the twine bands that were forked into the maw of the separator by the feeders. Also belonging to the earlier days were the stackers

more a meal was served. It was a point of honor and pride to have as good a "second table" as the first. I always preferred this table—the meal was more leisurely and usually not so crowded.

Often the job was completed at noon, and we moved quickly on to the next farm. Little time was lost in the move, and often another man was threshed on the same day. At the end of each job there was usually an adjustment between the farmer and his neighbors as to what was due him for extra work or what he owed to be paid in cash, goods or services. The latter was the usual mode of settlement.

The afternoon was similar to the morning, with the exception that we sometimes worked late to get a job done and that there was no tarrying at the meal. Too many jobs were waiting at home to permit any delays. There was a theory held by some that those whose threshing was done showed less alacrity for work as the job progressed around the ring, but I doubt if any proof of this assertion could have ever been adduced.

Some rings had a party or picnic to celebrate the end of threshing, but to the best of my knowledge this practice was never carried out in our neighborhood. We tried to get done in time to attend the fair in the next county, and perhaps this took the place of a purely local festivity.

Some true folklore existed about threshing in our ring. We always heard of the terrible destruction—it would be called sabotage today—due to some rascal's secreting a horse-shoe or the king-pin of a wagon in the center of a sheaf of wheat, which did a terrific amount of damage as it went through the separator. This knavish trick was usually attributed to some vindictive neighbor of the man on whose farm the accident took place. No one had apparently seen this happen, but all believed it was an imminent danger; every shut-down for repairs had us on our toes until we learned the cause of the stoppage.

Another standing joke was about what I might well call the "shrinking acreage motif." There was a considerable natural and desirable rivalry over the yield per acre, and the number of acres planted to wheat in the fall often diminished greatly before threshing time, thus increasing the yield per acre. If the discrepancy were too great, there might be some "joshing" or even sly checking of the acreage of each field.

But all was usually good-natured, and I never heard of a fight or serious dispute among the members of our ring.

I have already alluded to inventions and improvements that were soon to change and almost eliminate, from the rural picture in many areas, the ring, an institution that had stood almost unchanged for fifty years. The first of these came about in the years between 1914-18 with the perfecting of the gasoline tractor suitable for small farm use to the point that it could easily drive a small separator. Sometimes three or four farmers pooled their resources to buy an outfit and formed a small ring of their own, or a wealthy farmer would buy a rig himself, obtaining his help by threshing for three or four other farmers. The whole job took about the same time, but there were fewer men to feed and less general bother. Often the men carried their lunches or went home for dinner and supper. The experiment of feeding the men at noon and having them go home for supper didn't work very well, for mutual recriminations were hurled about to the effect that sharp practices were indulged in to avoid feeding the men at noon. Now, so I am told, the men go home for both meals in their own cars. All the men go home for meals, but the teams remain at the farm where the job is being done.

Sometimes we had some threshing to do in late August or early September. These were the barn and stack jobs, and many were the arguments over the relative merits of "barn-ing" and stacking over threshing from the field. The former did take a smaller crew, but also required a lot of hard work on the farmer's part in getting the wheat to the barn or stack. Usually those who did this were sort of ex-officio members of the ring, trading help with the nearest neighbors. Sometimes oats, which ripens later than wheat, was threshed after the wheat had been disposed of, but usually with a small crew.

The development of the gasoline tractor took from the harvesting scene one of its most colorful sights. It was safer, cleaner, and no longer did water and coal, as well as board for man and crew, have to be provided. The owner of the rig went home at night and did not need to arise at dawn to get up steam. The gas tractor was also less subject to mechanical break-down.

Undoubtedly the device that contributed most to the passing or decline of the threshing ring was the development of the

combine, especially the smaller ones selling at a price within the financial reach of the small farmer. The scarcity of farm labor has compelled some farmers to buy a combine in partnership; others hire a farmer who owns one to "combine" their crop. There is no doubt that it is an easy way to thresh, although there are some drawbacks to the method, so I am told.

Not for the last twenty years have I seen a large steam-driven rig in operation, and each year the number of tractor-driven rigs becomes less. The combine may well push them completely aside as it is perfected and made more available at a cheaper price that mass production may bring. This invention, I might add, has changed the process of baling the straw, once a fall or winter job. Now it is done in the field by a pick-up baler or from rows into which it has been raked by another type. It is more efficient and has cut down the need for communal activity in the rural neighborhoods.

I have, I believe, presented a true picture of a colorful rural institution that existed almost unchanged for half a century and more and is now either out or on its way out, a victim to modern invention and progress. Not that I regret it too much, for I can see the efficiency and advantage of the new processes, but I am sure that threshing as many in middle-age knew it will soon be a memory.

The earliest riddle that I remember hearing was the following:

Up on the hill stands an old red bull,
He eats and he eats, but he never gets full.

The answer was, of course, the red threshing machine, as all we children on the farms knew so well thirty-five or forty years ago. I wonder how many farm children of today would guess it correctly on the first trial? Few, I dare say.

Miami University

Oxford, Ohio

(A farm-bred editor would find difficulty, indeed, in refraining from comments on this fine mixture of folklore and nostalgia. Next to Christmas and the Fourth of July we farm youngsters probably enjoyed threshing more than any other occasion. The approach of the steam engine and the separator with their businesslike glamour was a real event in the life

of any farm boy; and, while the grownups grumbled about the work involved, they, too, seemed to enjoy the fast, expert, and pleasant mixture of labor and neighborliness.

We threshed differently in some respects in the Kankakee Valley in Northern Indiana, but the main pattern and the excitement was the same as that described by Mr. Miller. The threshers never ate supper on the job; my mother always looked horrified when she heard reports that both dinner and supper were served in some areas (notably in Ohio, where her sister lived). Nor was the grain ever sacked at the separator. It was run directly into box wagons (later trucks) to be hauled to the elevator or to the bin. I am sure we would have been condescending toward such laborious practices. Driving a grain wagon was the work of boys (ten to fifteen) as a rule if the family owned a tractable team. Sheaves (we always called them bundles) were never stacked or put into the barn before threshing, but "shocked" in the field and threshed from there.

We expected the owner of the threshing rig to supply the ice cream for a feast after the threshing was over, and we were rarely disappointed. As a matter of fact we almost considered it our due, for we always felt that the owner made big money.

The stories of iron articles intentionally placed in the bundles to cause breakdowns were a recurring phenomenon, and the "shrinking acreage" was always good for a laugh. A back forty in wheat shrank magically to a thirty-five-and-a-half at threshing time.

Mr. Miller has done ample justice to the meals served to threshing crews. And who hasn't who has ever had a chance to do justice to such a meal?—The Editor.)

MYTHS AND LEGENDS FROM SOUTHERN ILLINOIS

By JESSE W. HARRIS

Southern Illinois has its share of myth and legend handed down from generation to generation. Some of this material has been recorded by local historians, but much of it is still the property of the common people. Folklore of certain types is still a live and growing thing among us. This fact, I believe, is very well illustrated by the "strange beast" stories recorded in this collection.

I. TWO GRAND TOWER MYTHS

1. *The Origin of Grand Tower*

Reported by Lydia Keneipp, Grand Tower

Grand Tower takes its name from Tower Rock, which stands in the Mississippi River opposite the town. But for a very remarkable circumstance there would have been no Tower Rock, and the town would have had to look elsewhere for an appropriate name. A long time ago, according to local tradition, during the big flood a haystack came floating down the river. Opposite present-day Grand Tower, a fisherman intercepted the haystack and anchored it firmly in the river. In the course of time, the haystack petrified and formed Tower Rock. When a town grew up on the Illinois shore, the people called it Grand Tower for the marvelous rock across the way.

2. *Lover's Leap*

A place like Tower Rock would be incomplete without its story of a lovelorn maiden jumping to her doom from its top. This incident happened in the days before white men came into this part of the world. An Indian girl fell in love with a brave from another tribe. Unfortunately the two tribes were at war at the time. Tower Rock was the rendezvous of the two lovers, who, apparently, refused to permit the war between their people to come between them. But, as fate would have it, some braves from the girl's tribe discovered the two together on the rock, and they summarily killed the girl's lover. The girl jumped into the river and was drowned. On many a night when the spring floods send the waters swirling about the big rock, you may still hear a moaning and wailing out there, which some people say is the Indian maiden mourning for her lost love.

II. SATAN'S HANDIWORK

Two other works of nature near Grand Tower may be cited as evidence of supernatural forces at work there in times past. A little north of the town stands a rocky ridge called the *Devil's Backbone* and a rock hill known as the *Devil's Oven*. William Oliver, an English traveler who spent some time in the Grand Tower region in 1842, speaking of local superstitions said that "anything very singular in nature is ascribed to the devil, as *devil's oven*,¹ . . . , etc." The swift current in the river at this point no doubt further convinced pioneers poling their flatboats up stream of the presence of the old trouble maker. If more evidence of the presence of the evil one was needed, it was no doubt supplied when a party of immigrants went ashore here in 1786 to pull their boat around the point with ropes. Indians lying in wait among the rocks of the Devil's Backbone set upon the party and killed all except a seventeen-year-old youth.²

The Devil was fairly busy in other parts of Southern Illinois, too, if we may judge from examples of natural architecture attributed to him. Ferne Clyffe Park, near Goreville, boasts a *Devil's Stairway*. Giant City State Park has its *Devil's Standtable*. The Crab Orchard Lake area has its *Devil's Kitchen*. And there is a *Devil's Hole* in Rock Castle Creek.

III. HEXEBUCKEL

Witches, also, have had their day in Southern Illinois, and have left behind a goodly number of stories and some other evidence of their presence here.³ Of the latter, *Hexebuckel*, or Witches' Hump, a hill north of Red Bud, stands to remind us of the times when the witch had to be reckoned with. Mrs. Carrie Lohrberg, who has lived in that vicinity for seventy-five years, says the hill was a place of retreat for the _____ family to escape the spells cast by witches. For some reason not now apparent, witches were unable to ascend the hill.

¹ William Oliver, *Eight Months in Illinois*, 1843 (Chicago: Walter M. Hill, 1924), p. 71. Italics are mine.

² John W. Allen, *Jackson County Notes* (1945), p. 10.

³ A number of witch stories of this region may be found in Charles Neely, *Tales and Songs from Southern Illinois* (1935) and in Grace p. Smith, "Folklore from Egypt," *Journal of American Folklore*, Vol. 54.

Hexebuckel is still occasionally used to frighten boys and girls who have a tendency to ramble about at night.

Mrs. Lohrberg is, also, the source of the following account of how a man of that vicinity broke a spell on his cow. The time was about seventy years ago.

"There was an old man," says Mrs. Lohrberg, "who used to live with Father ———, priest at ———'s old church near the cemetery. At the time my father and mother lived in Hecker; his name was Ausbacher. When the cow would not let her milk down, he would place a heavy rock on her back." The open Bible was customarily used in this fashion to break spells cast on cows by witches.⁴ In England and Scotland, however, rocks hung over horses were used to ward off witches.⁵ It is not clear whether the old man in this case was adapting these methods to his own use. "My father," says Mrs. Lohrberg, "said there were some half grown pigs in the pasture and he thought they got the milk."

Although witch stories handed down from the past may still be found by the diligent searcher, they are not part of the story-teller's stock these days. Lack of faith has reduced this once prolific field to a matter of a few shopworn charms as far as present practice is concerned.

IV. THE HOT-FINGERED GHOST

Told by Freddie Schimpf, Vergennes, who heard his grandmother tell it.

The ghost story is still a live type. Some of these stories are handed down from one generation to another. The following story of the ghost with the hot finger is a traditional story from the Vergennes region.

A certain wicked man died and his relatives set up an appropriate stone to mark his grave. But on the stone they had chiseled the very inappropriate inscription: "He lived with the Lord and died with the Lord." It was not long thereafter that some people who lived near the graveyard began to hear weird sounds there at night. Their curiosity was great, but not great enough to give them the necessary

⁴ Milo Erwin, *History of Williamson County* (1876), p. 43.

⁵ G. L. Kittredge, *Witchcraft in Old and New England* (Cambridge, Mass., 1929), p. 220.

courage to investigate. However, a man, who was spending the night with these people, on hearing the story, resolved that he would investigate if he heard the sounds that night. He was not disappointed, for some time after the family had gone to bed, the sounds came as usual from the graveyard, and the visitor hurried over there. Seeing nothing at first, he sat down and leaned against a grave stone. A moment later he looked up to see the ghost of the wicked man whose monument had been inscribed, "He lived with the Lord and died with the Lord." The ghost told the visitor that his unrest was caused by the misleading inscription, and that he had come back to get someone to remove the inscription. Then, the ghost touched the monument with his finger, and to the amazement of the visitor the finger burned a hole right through the stone. Then the ghost disappeared.

V. COON SKIN DECEPTION

In early days, pelts of the raccoon, mink, deer, etc., were common articles of barter at frontier stores. It was inevitable, of course, that this system should give rise to some of the prize stories along the frontier. The most celebrated story of this type is Colonel David Crockett's account of how he used the same 'coon skin ten times over to buy whisky during his first campaign for a seat in congress. How thoroughly the frontier citizen appreciated the deception involved in this transaction is recorded by Crockett:

The way I got to the blind side of the Yankee merchant was pretty generally known before election day, and the result was that my opponent might as well have whistled jigs to a milestone as attempt to beat up for votes in that district. I beat him out and out, quite back into the old year, and there was scarce enough left of him, after the canvas was over, to make a small grease spot.⁶

The three stories of this type recorded below are traditional in Southern Illinois.

⁶ *Life of Colonel David Crockett*, Written by Himself (Philadelphia: G. G. Evans, 1860), pp. 240-245.

1. *Reselling a 'Coon Skin*

The earliest of these stories had its setting in Bond County, and it dates back to the War of 1812. It was long a part of the oral tradition of the county, and was recorded in a local history in 1882.⁷ The story goes that a group of men bent on celebrating Christmas found themselves short of whisky. Like Colonel Crockett, they had but one 'coon skin among them. At the local "grocery"⁸ they exchanged the skin for a bottle of whisky. Passing the bottle around, they succeeded in getting the grocery-keeper tipsy. Then, one of them surreptitiously pushed the 'coon skin through a hole to the outside, where another member of the party picked it up and brought it back into the grocery. Welcomed as if he were a newcomer, he presented the 'coon skin and received his whisky without question from the inebriated merchant. This deception was repeated six or seven times.

2. *Reselling a Cat Skin*

The scene of the second story is Carrier Mills, in Saline County. This story is part of the local tradition of the locality. Here the deception was more complete because a thirsty local citizen passed a cat skin for a mink skin at the local store, and then purloined the skin and repeated the deception at least three times. This incident, which took place some seventy-five years ago, is the source of the popular name "Catskin" which is used by local people for Carrier Mills.⁹

3. *Reselling a 'Coon Skin*

Blairsville, Williamson County, is the setting for the third story.¹⁰ A local merchant bought a 'coon skin from three boys, who exchanged it for sweets. The merchant's son, who was "in cahoots" with the three boys, passed the skin out the rear door of the storeroom to his friends, who sold it again

⁷ W. H. Perrin, *History of Bond and Montgomery Counties* (1882), p. 19.

⁸ A term used to indicate "saloon" in pioneer times.

⁹ J. W. Harris, "The Catskin Legend in Southern Illinois," *Journal of American Folklore*, Vol. 58 (1945), pp. 301-302.

¹⁰ Told to me by Mrs. Hazel Snyder Leffler, of Cambria, who heard the story from her father, James Snyder.

to the merchant. They repeated this trick three or four times.

Obviously these stories are of the same pattern as Crockett's famous yarn. Otherwise, however, they are of independent origin, and are to be explained only on the basis of a widespread frontier taste for this kind of deception.

VI. STRANGE BEAST STORIES

Another type of story that is of much more concern to us here in Southern Illinois nowadays is the "strange beast" legend. These stories possibly illustrate the folktale in actual process of being made. Every few years some community reports the presence of a mysterious beast over in the local creek bottom. As time passes, this story grows, and very often spreads to other communities. Quite often the excitement aroused by one of these stories increases all through the winter months and reaches a climax early in the spring. The most recent of these episodes occurred about five years ago.

Although it is difficult to determine just where a story of this sort has its beginning, this one seems to have originated in the Gum Creek bottom near Mt. Vernon. During the summer of 1941, a preacher was hunting squirrels in the woods along the creek when a large animal that looked something like a baboon jumped out of a tree near him. The preacher struck at the beast with his gun barrel when it walked toward him in an upright position. He finally frightened it away by firing a couple of shots into the air.

Later the beast began to alarm rural people by uttering terrorizing screams mostly at night in the wooded bottom lands along the creeks. School children in the rural districts sometimes heard it, too, and hunters saw its tracks. Some old timers, who probably remembered the "painter" scares of long ago, thought it might be a panther, for panthers used to scream like that in the woods at night. By early spring of 1942, the animal had local people aroused to a fighting pitch. About that time, a farmer near Bonnie reported that the beast had killed his dog. A call went out for volunteers to join a mass hunt to round up the animal.

The beast must have got news of the big hunt, for reports started coming in of its appearance in other creek bot-

toms, some as much as forty or fifty miles from the original site. A man driving near the Big Muddy River, in Jackson County, one night saw the beast bound across the road. Some hunters saw evidence of its presence away over on the Okaw. Its rapid changing from place to place must have been aided considerably by its ability to jump, for, by this time, reports had it jumping along at from twenty to forty feet per leap. This ability led some people to conclude that it was probably a kangaroo at large.

It is impossible to say how many hunters and parties of hunters, armed with everything from shotguns to ropes and nets, went out to look for the strange beast in the various creek bottoms where it had been seen, or its tracks had been seen, or its piercing screams had been heard. Those taking nets and ropes were intent on bringing the creature back alive.

Usually this strange beast can't be found, and interest in it dies as mysteriously as it arose in the beginning. In the instance cited above, some men finally captured a wild steer that had been roaming the bottom lands; and, some people concluded that this was the strange beast. But nobody could be certain. About twenty-five years ago, a 'coon hunter from Hecker one night heard a strange beast screaming up ahead on Prairie du Long Creek. Hunters chased this phantom from time to time all one winter. Their dogs would get the trail, then lose it, and they would hear it screaming down the creek in the opposite direction. It was that kind of creature: you'd hear it up creek, but when you set out in that direction you'd hear it a mile down creek. The most noted hunter in that community says it was some kind of bird; some of the others who tried to find it don't think it was any kind of bird you can draw a bead on.

Southern Illinois Normal University

Carbondale, Illinois

FIVE FOLKSONGS FROM RICHMOND, INDIANA

By JANE WILLETS

When my maternal grandmother, Jennie Delk, was a girl in Richmond, Indiana, in the 1860's and 70's she was extremely fond of singing and was locally famous for her sweet voice and her long memory. She not only sang for her own pleasure—or comfort—but was an ardent participant in the “singin’, spellin’, and recitin’ bees” so popular at that time. Many years later my grandmother remembered some of these songs and still sang them occasionally. The following songs were among her favorites:

1. *The Sailor Boy* (?)

Early in the spring when I was young;
The flowers bloomed and the gay birds sung;
Not a bird was happier than I
When my sailor love was nigh.

Refrain

Tra la la la la la, la la la
Tra la la, la la la
Not a bird was happier than I
When my sailor love was nigh.
(Last two lines of verse)

The moon had arisen o'er the eastern hill;
The stars shone bright, 'twas twilight still;
Sailor lad and his bride
Were walking by the ocean side.

----- the ship sailed away
----- at the breaking of the day
----- the broad ship bears my love away

Many years have passed and he comes no more
To greet his bride on the lonely shore;
The ship went down at the howling of the storm,
And the waves enclose my lover's form.

Now I wish that I were sleeping, too,
Beneath the waves of the ocean blue.
My soul to God, and my body in the sea,
And the blue waves rolling over me.

You may dig my grave both wide and deep;
Place a marble slab at my head and feet;
On my breast a turtle dove
To certify that I died of love.

(From the standpoint of folklore, "The Sailor Boy" has always seemed to me the most interesting of the songs grandmother sang. Two versions of this ballad are recorded by Mary Eddy, *Journal of American Folklore*, 35, pp. 410-413) as sung in Ohio in the 19th century. One version was found in the Reverend Franklin Eddy's album dated Ashtabula, Ohio, 1852; the other was sung by a woman in Shreve, Ohio. The tune Mary Eddy records is only slightly similar to the tune grandmother sang, being most doleful while grandmother's tune was gay. Neither version includes the "Dig my grave" last verse, but in other respects both are quite similar.

The missing third verse in one of Mary Eddy's versions is:

'Twas scarce three months we had been wed,
And oh, how fast the months had fled!
But we were to part at the dawning of the day,
And the proud ship bore my love away.

Also in this same version are the verses:

'Tis autumn now, and I am alone;
The flowers have bloomed and the birds have flown;
All is sad, yet none so sad as I,
For my sailor lad no more is nigh.

My sailor sleeps beneath the wave,
The mermaids they kneel o'er his grave,
The mermaids they at the bottom of the sea,
Are weeping their sad tears for me.

The version sung by Mrs. Ross of Shreve has two additional verses at the beginning of the song:

Our youthful hearts do oft 'times weep
For those who plow the briney deep.
Think how many find a grave
Beneath a wide outspreading wave.

But now I will relate a case
Which happened in my early days
Of a sailor boy whose heart was true,
But now he lies in the ocean blue.

In Mary Eddy's collection the song is entitled "The Sailor and his Bride" or "The Sailor's Bride." My grandmother was never quite sure of the title, "The Sailor Boy," and thought it might have been "Early in the Spring" or that it did not have a title.

J. H. Cox records the ballad from West Virginia in *Folk-songs of the South*, No. 113, pp. 364-65, under the titles, "The Sailor and His Bride" and "The Sailor Boy." Both of these versions are short—four and five verses—and lack the "dig my grave" verse. Cox writes that this song appears on de Marsan's list 15 as No. 90 under the title, "The Sailor Boy's Bride." The ballad is also sung in Nebraska and other Middle Western states according to Louise Pound, who records it in *Folk-songs of Nebraska and the Central West* (Lincoln, 1915), p. 42, under the title, "The Sailor Bride's Lament."

Apparently the last verse of grandmother's version is an addition from another ballad, either from "The Sailor Boy," the American version of the English ballad, "Sweet William" (*JAF*, Vol. 30 p. 364), or from the "Tavern in the Town"—"Butcher Boy" songs. The verse appears almost invariably in these songs, but except for the song my grandmother sang it is lacking in "The Sailor's Bride." It is also found in some versions of "Early, Early in the Spring" but according to Cox does not rightfully belong to this ballad (Cox, No. 111, pp. 358-361).—J. W.)

The four following songs are probably not, properly speaking, folksongs. Their nature seems too much akin to the

sentimental popular songs of the eighties and nineties which circulated for the most part in books, although they may have enjoyed some oral dissemination. They are, however, worthy of inclusion as examples of this type of song.—The Editor.

2. *My Grandmother's Chair*

My grandmother she at the age of eighty-three
One day in May was taken ill and died.
And when she was dead the will, of course, was read
By the lawyer as we all stood side by side.

To my brother it was found she had left a hundred pounds,
The same unto my sister I'll declare.
But when it came to me, the lawyer said, "I see
She has left to you her old armchair."

Chorus

Then how they tittered; how they chaffed;
How my brother and my sister laughed
When they heard the lawyer declare,
Granny left me nothing but her old armchair!

I thought it hardly fair, but said I did not care
And in the evening took the chair away.
Then my brother at me laughed, "When you settle down in life
You can sit in your old armchair."

But what he said came true for in a month or two
Strange to say I settled down to married life.
I first a girl did court, and then a ring I bought
Took her to church and then she was my wife.

The dear girl and me were as happy as could be,
And in the evening when my work was done
I no more abroad would roam, but at night would stay at home
And be seated in my old armchair.

One night the chair fell down and when I picked it up
The bottom had fallen out upon the floor;
And there to my surprise I saw before my eyes
A lot of notes—two thousand pounds or more.

When my brother heard this, the fellow I'll confess
Grew almost green with rage and tore his hair.
But I only laughed at him and I said unto him, "Jim,
Don't you wish you had the old armchair!"

(I was unable to find a reference to this song, though from the use of the word pounds instead of dollars I assume that the song is English or Canadian in origin.—J. W.)

3. *The Sheriff's Sale*

There's an old rusty cot that stands in the square,
For ninety long years that old cot has stood there.
Surrounded by trees and a fence that is worn;
'Twas the home of my forefathers; there I was born.

You scarcely would find a happier lot
Than our little family who dwelt in the cot,
With father and mother, sister, brother and I
Till sickness came o'er us and father did die.

Then brother left home to find something to do
And where he had gone no one ever knew.
So I toiled late and early to keep down the debt
And often I hear myself pleading there yet.

Chorus

"Please spare the old home,
Please spare it I say.
Don't turn out my mother so feeble and gray
And my dear loving sister so sickly and pale.
Auctioneer, auctioneer! Won't you please stop the sale!"

I begged and I pled with no avail
The auctioneer continued to cry on the sale.

The very last bidder was a man quite unknown
Till his money was paid and he purchased our home.

Then mother and sister with hearts sad and sore
Prepared to depart from our cottage door.
When the stranger stepped up saying, "Your sorrows are done.
I restore you your home! I'm your long lost son!"

Tears and rejoicing were there on that day
When brother embraced my dear mother so gray,
With a welcome for me and my sister so pale.
And that put an end to the dread sheriff's sale.

Chorus

"Please spare the old home,
Please spare it I say.
Don't turn out my mother so feeble and gray
And my dear loving sister so sickly and pale.
Auctioneer, auctioneer! Won't you please stop the sale!"

(This song is mentioned in Louise Pound, *Folk-Songs of Nebraska and the Central West* (Lincoln: Nebraska Academy of Sciences, Publications, 1915) IX, No. 3, pp. 38-39.—J. W.)

4. *Crystal Leroy*

No, brother I'll never be happy.
'Tis useless to tell me so now.
My broken heart only is waiting
For a resting place under the snow.

I only was dreaming, my darling,
How happy our home was with joy
When a serpent crept into our Eden,
'Twas the fair face of Crystal Leroy.

I was dreaming again of my wedding
One year ago only tonight,
When I blushed 'neath the gaslight above me
In my garments and jewels so bright.

She came with the face of an angel
To bid me a lifetime of joy
But my heart sank with fear at the meaning
In the dark eyes of Crystal Leroy.

Alternate

When she gave her soft hand to my husband
I knew that he thought me a toy
By the side of this radiant beauty
By the fair face of Crystal Leroy.

The time passed away and my Harry
Grew careless and thoughtless each day
And I knew 'twas the wiles of a demon
That so artfully lured him away.

At last one fair evening I found them;
It seemed my heart's blood to destroy
Hand in hand with her head on his shoulder
My Harry and Crystal Leroy.

Oh, brother be kind to your darling,
My heart has grown sickened and faint
When I think of the wiles of a demon
With the beautiful face of a saint.

When asleep 'neath the snowdrifts of winter
Where sorrow nor sin can annoy,
Will you tell them they murdered—Oh, Harry,
God forgive you and Crystal Leroy.

(See Louise Pound, *ibid.*—J. W.)

5. *The Stepmother*

The marriage rite was over and though I turned aside
To keep the guests from seeing the tears I could not hide.
I wreathed my face in smiling and led my little brother
To greet my father's chosen but I could not call her mother.

(Repeat last line)

She was a fair young creature with meek and gentle air,
With blue eyes soft and tender and sunny silken hair.
I know my father gives her the love he bore another,
But I will not forget thee my own, my angel mother.

They took my mother's picture from its accustomed place
And put beside my father's a younger, fairer face.
They made her dear old chamber the boudoir of another
But I will not forget thee my own, my angel mother.

My father in the sunshine of happy days to come
May not forget the shadow that darkened our dear home.
He is no longer lonely while I and little brother
Must still be orphan children; God gives us but one mother.

(Listed in Louise Pound, *ibid.* This song has been recorded
for the archive of American Folk-Song, No. 3784B2.—J. W.)

Flourtown, Pennsylvania

THREE FOLKSONGS FROM MISSOURI

By RUTH ANN MUSICK

1 Young Johnnie

As sung by my uncle, Luke Geoghegan, with some additions
by my aunt, Jennie Geoghegan, both of Kirksville, Missouri.

Oh, young Johnnie came on sea;
Young Johnnie came on shore;
And he came unto the spot
Where he courted before.

"Oh, what luck have you, Young Johnnie?
What luck have you from sea?"
"It is quite too indifferent,"
Young Johnnie, said he.

"But call in your pretty Polly,
And set her down by me;
We will drown all melancholy,
And married we will be."

"My daughter, she is absent,
And has been all the day;
And, John, if she were here,
She would turn you away."

Then Johnnie, being weary,
Hung his heavy head;
And he called for a candle
To light him to bed.

"The beds are all full, Johnnie,
And will be all this week;
And further for your lodging,
Young Johnnie, you must seek."

"Oh, it's forty shillings of the old,
I ofttimes have been told."
And young John, he pulled out
That long purse of gold.

Oh, the sight of the gold
Made the old woman stare;
And the sight of the gold
Made the old man swear.

"It's you have been in earnest,
And we have been in jest;
And of all my companions,
I love my Johnnie best."

Then down came pretty Polly
With a smile upon her face;
She threw her arms around his neck,
And kindly him embraced.

Saying, "You're welcome home, Young Johnnie,
You're welcome home from sea,
And the great beds are ready,
And you may lie in them."

"Before I'd lie in your great beds
I'd lie out in the street;
For it's when I had no money,
My lodgings I might seek."

"But now I've money plenty,
I'll make the taverns whirl;
I'll wager a bottle of good brandy,
And by my side a girl."

Come, all ye royal lovers,
That sail the raging main
To gather gold and silver
In cold storms and rain.

I pray you make good use of it,
And lay it up in store;
Of all my companions,
Young Johnnie turned outdoors!

(There is a variant of this song in Vance Randolph, *The Ozarks* (New York: The Vanguard Press, 1931), pp. 189-191.
R. A. M.

For variants and references see W. Roy Mackenzie, *Ballads and Sea Songs from Nova Scotia* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1928), pp. 245-250. The ballad is called "Green Beds" in Mackenzie's collection. Note the wording *great beds* in stanza twelve of Miss Musick's version.—The Editor.)

2 *The Cruel Mother*

As sung by T. J. Barnes, Kirksville, Missouri.
Indulgent parent dear, pray now attend
To this relation here, which I do pend;
A deep deep tragedy, no one knew for why
A mother's cruelty ruined her son.

This maiden, whom I treat, and by consent,
A squire most complete, and as he went
To court a merchant's maid, his mother often said,
"Why will you thus disgrace our family?"

"Dear mother, say not so; do not despise
My love, for well I know her charming eyes;
Was she as poor as Job, I in my royal robe,
The lord of all the globe, she shall be mine."

And when she understood his love was true,
She sought the damsel's blood, envious grew;
Said she, "I'll have her life; for she shall be his wife."
Therefore a bloody knife she did provide.

She chose a proper time as you shall hear
For to commit this crime, when none was near;
Her son to London went; she for the maiden sent,
Sending in sweet intent to walk with her.

This maid with cheerful heart, she came with speed;
Not thinking that her heart would have to bleed.
His mother spoke up first, after a bloody thirst,
Saying, "Dear child, you must go walk with me."

"Oh, that without delay, Madam," said she,
"I pray to think I may permitted be
To walk abroad with you." Poor child, she little knew
What sorrows would ensue. Death is at hand.

Near to a solemn grove that did appear,
There the course was love, as they drew near;
And soon she changed her scheme, and showed her hateful
spleen;
"Madam, what do you mean?" the damsel cried.

"What I mean you'll find, before we part;
This very knife designs to pierce your heart;
You have ensnared my son, whose heart was quickly won;
I'll undo all that's done here in this place."

She fell upon her knees, seeing the knife,
Saying, "Madam, if you please, spare but my life;
I'll make this promise here, if you will set me clear,
Your son I'll ne'er go near while I have breath."

"No more you shan't," she cries, "I'll make all sure;
Down by this riverside, you must endure,
Instead of Cupid's dart, one fatal moment smart,"
She said unto the heart, and stabbed her straight.

With that the crimson blood ran down amain;
At length the wretched flood the grass did stain.
Her cheeks, so rosy red, now changed as pale as lead.
With rushes cover-ed, there was she left.

As squire return-ed home, late in the night;
He went to see his love, his heart's delight;
In coming to that place, alas a woeful case,
Tears trickled down his face for his fair maid.

"She had been lost long since he went," they said,
Although a diligent search had been made
All the whole country round, she was not to be found.
In sorrow compassed round, the squire stood.

He took his chamber straight, when all alone,
In tears he did relate his grief unknown;
Praying continually, that some discovery
Of that sad tragedy might soon be made.

While he lamenting lay, late in the night;
The room appeared like day, all over light;
Three bitter groans he heard, and then her ghost appeared,
From head to foot besmeared with purple gore.

The apparition made close by his side,
He, being not afraid, to it he cried,
"What all unhappy fate makes you so unfortunate?"
The spirit did relate all that had passed.

Then with a groan or two, vanished away;
Leaving the squire, who lamenting lay,
With many a bitter tear till daylight did appear;
He called his mother near into his room.

Saying, "You worst of woman kind, what have you done?
You have through murder fine, plag'ued your son;
You have destroyed my love, which will my ruin prove,
By all the powers above, I cannot live."

With that a sword he drew, run his own body through,
Crying, "Oh, mother, you have ruined me!"

And when she saw her son lay on the floor,
She gave a dreadful shriek; servants therefore,
Came running up amain, but help was all in vain,
The squire, he was slain. No life was left.

This cruel mother, she did soon confess
Her bloody cruelty, her wickedness;
Says she, "Here is the knife, by which I took her life,
The same shall end all strife." So stabbed herself.

This cruel mother, through ambitious pride,
Caused her son to ruin, three persons died;
Let this a warning be to high and low degree,
When love it can't be free, it alters the mind.

(This ballad has no relationship with Child No. 20 which has the same title, but I have found no parallels.—R.A.M.)

3 *There Was an Old Woman*

That is all I can remember of a song my father used to sing at Kirksville, Mo.

There was an old woman
In London she did dwell;
She loved her old man dearly,
But another twice as well.

Chorus

And it's lawsy law, what ails you?
Dear, oh dear, what ails you?
Thankses I, what ails you?
And what's the matter now?

She went to the doctor
To see if she could find
Some medicine of any kind,
To make the old man blind.

She bought seven bottles
And made him take them all;
And then he said, "Oh dear, oh dear,
I cannot see at all."

(For text and references see Paul Brewster, *Ballads and Songs of Indiana* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Publications, Folklore Series, No. 1, 1940), pp. 281-282. Mr. William Hugh Jansen, President of the Hoosier Folklore Society, reports a Connecticut variant of this song which he heard as a boy. Miss Musick's variant is a fragment of the ballad which tells of a woman who loved another man twice as well as her husband. She fed her husband bone marrow to make him blind. Her husband then professed blindness and asked her to push him into the river. She ran at him, he stepped aside, she plunged into the water, calling for help, only to be told that her husband could not see her because of his dreadful blindness.—The Editor)

Iowa Wesleyan College

Mt. Pleasant, Iowa

NOTES

Readers are invited to participate in this department by using it as a clearing house for folklore information of all kinds, to report variants of stories or songs or other material given in preceding issues, or to discover from other readers variants of unpublished lore that has been collected or remembered.

FOLK BELIEFS FROM MT. AYR HIGH SCHOOL

By C. O. TULLIS

1. If you drop a dish rag, someone who is dirtier than you will come to visit.
2. It is bad luck to sweep dirt outside after dark.
3. If you sweep dirt under a rug and the cat lies on it, the cat will have fits.
4. If you borrow salt, it's bad luck to return it. The lender may come over and borrow some back though.
5. A bird fluttering at a window is a sign of bad luck.
6. Go in one door and out another of someone's house, and you will never be back, or you will bring that person company.
7. Walk through someone's dirt while he is sweeping and you will be an old maid.
8. See a pin, pick it up
The rest of the day you will have good luck.
See a pin and let it lay
Bad luck you'll have the rest of the day.
9. Kill a toad and your cows will give bloody milk that night.
10. When your right ear rings it means someone's talking about you or good news is coming.
11. When your left ear rings, it means that someone is talking about you or bad news.
12. If you start some place, then turn around and go back home without sitting down, you will have bad luck.
13. If a rooster crows by the door, you'll have company.
14. If you pinch someone when you see a white horse, it brings good luck.
15. Don't ever walk over a broom, or you'll have bad luck.

16. Don't light three lamps on one table, or there will be a death in the famiy.

17. Never sing at the supper table, or you'll have bad luck.

18. After the cows are turned out to pasture on the 15th of December, they'll lie down facing the east and won't get up until sunrise.

19. When making dough for bread, if there's not enough left for a big loaf, it's a sign of company coming.

20. If you drop a comb, do not pick it up unless you step on it.

21. If you go out to the barn at midnight on the Fourth of July and talk to the horse, he will talk back to you.

22. Don't rock a rocking chair without someone in it; it's bad luck.

23. When you drop a knife, you will have bad luck from the direction the blade falls.

24. Don't bring a hoe or ax into the house, because it's bad luck.

25. If it rains when someone is being buried, there will be another death in that family in a short period of time.

26. Don't count the cars of a funeral procession or there will be bad luck in your family.

27. If a broom falls across a doorway, you are supposed to have company.

28. If you are eating and have bread on your plate then take more, someone is supposed to come to your house hungry.

Rensselaer, Indiana

FOLKLORE INSTITUTE OF AMERICA

The second session of the Folklore Institute of America will be held at Indiana University during the eight weeks from June 19 to August 16, 1946.

The Institute will bring together a group of successful and distinguished folklorists for lectures, demonstrations, and conferences. The wide variety of activities in the Institute will be directed towards the interests and needs of several groups: (a) regular university students, (b) practical folklore collectors, (c) the general public, and (d) the folklore specialists themselves.

Regular credit-bearing courses will be conducted throughout the session, which will serve (a) to introduce students to the whole field of folklore, and (b) to train them in research methods. There will also be non-credit lectures and demonstrations, round table discussions and opportunity for private conferences, as well as a regular weekly series of public lectures.

For this session of the Institute the following credit-bearing courses are tentatively planned: *Introduction to Folklore*; *American Folklore*; *American Indian Folklore*; *The Folktale and Allied Forms*; *Teaching and Presentation of Folklore*; and *Folklore Techniques*.

The staff for the Institute will be composed of scholars representing various approaches to Folklore: ethnologists, folktale and folksong collectors, musicologists, and comparative folklorists. The student will find a variety of specialists such as cannot be brought together under ordinary conditions by a single university.

The faculty for the Institute has not yet been completely selected and several additional names will certainly be added. Tentative arrangements have been made for assistance at the Institute during longer or shorter periods by the following: Samuel P. Bayard, E. C. Beck, Paul G. Brewster, Richard Chase, Richard M. Dorson, Wayland D. Hand, Thelma G. James, Louis C. Jones, Sven Liljeblad, Alan Lomax, John A. Lomax, Vicente T. Mendoza, John J. Niles, Charles Seegar, Stith Thompson, and Mrs. Ermine W. Voegelin.

Provision has been made from several sources for small scholarships to the Institute.

Regular classes are scheduled during the first four days of the week so that long week ends are reserved for informal conferences. A series of weekly public lectures will be given and there will also be opportunity for participation in such folk activities as square dancing and the singing of folksongs.

Adequate living quarters have been assured by Indiana University. Inquiries concerning rooms or lodging should be addressed to Mrs. Alice Nelson, Morrison Hall, Indiana University.

It is hoped that persons thinking of attending the Institute will communicate with the Director as promptly as possible.

Stith Thompson, Director

BILL WALTZ, A HOOSIER FOLK CHARACTER

By WILLIAM HUGH JANSEN

Giving a lecture on folklore to a teachers' institute in English, Indiana, in December, 1945, I used as an illustration some of the lore of Oregon Smith, the folk hero who sprang from Bloomington, Indiana. After the meeting, Mr. C. J. Swarens, the principal of a school participating in the institute, approached and asked if I had ever heard of Bill Waltz. Since I hadn't, I was immediately off on that delightful pastime to a folklorist—collecting.

Like Oregon Smith, Bill Waltz was by no means a figment himself, for he actually lived in Milltown, in Southern Indiana. Also like Oregon Smith, Bill gained his place in popular legend by his propensity for exaggeration, or tall tales, if you will. How much variance there is between legend and fact in Waltz' instance and whether, as is true of Oregon Smith, tradition has changed him from a reputable character to a rather disreputable one I do not yet know. It would be interesting to do some research on this point, and I hope that perhaps I shall.

At any rate, thanks to Mr. Swarens, who says there are many more, here are three tales told by Bill Waltz about himself some thirty-five years ago and now told about him down in Southern Indiana.

1. *Mixed Weather and the Deer*

One warm summer day, Bill was out cradling wheat when his dogs routed a deer and began to chase it. The deer easily kept ahead of the dogs and led them in a great circle away from the wheat field and finally back again right through where Bill was working. All through the day, the deer kept coming back through that field, always running easily ahead of the dogs. And do you know the dogs never would have caught that deer if he hadn't started to cross the river near Bill's field? But they did catch him there because he slipped and broke his leg on the ice.

(For a parallel see Herbert Halpert, "John Darling, A New York Munchausen," *Journal of American Folklore*, 57 (1944), p. 104. For stories of mixed weather see Herbert Halpert, "Pennsylvania Fairylore and Folktales," *Journal of American Folklore*, 58 (1945), p. 133; and Fred H. Hart, *The Sazerac Lying Club* (San Francisco: Henry Keller & Co., Second Edition, 1878), p. 26.)

2. *Just Like Her Mother*

Bill was a cattle-buyer once and he used to tell about the time when he went out into the country to buy some cows for another dealer. In the herd was a pretty little calf that Bill liked so much he thought he'd keep it for himself. So he took her home and turned her out in the meadow with his own cows. The heifer grew into the prettiest animal he'd ever seen and Bill was just waiting to see what kind of calves she'd have. When it came time, Bill had her bred, but she bore no calf. After a couple of more unsuccessful breedings, Bill went to the farmer who had sold him the heifer and asked what was the matter with her. The farmer said he didn't know unless it was that she was like her mother, who had always been sterile, too.

3. *Shrinking Buckskin Pants*

Bill used to tell how he went fishing one day in a new pair of buckskin pants he had made himself. When he was pulling in his first fish, he fell into the river. But seeing it was such a hot day, he stood there in the cool water and went right on fishing. Pretty soon he noticed his pants legs were stretching so that he was actually standing on the ends of the legs. So he reached down in the water with his knife and cut off a piece around the bottom of each pantleg. Pretty soon he saw the pants had stretched again and he was tripping over the bottoms. So he cut a piece off each leg again. He kept on doing this all morning—fishing and then cutting off the bottoms of his pants when they stretched too far. About noon he climbed out of the river with his fish and started home in the hot sun. Pretty soon the heat of the sun began to dry those buckskin pants. As they dried, the pants began to shrink and kept on shrinking and shrinking until Bill was barely walking on tiptoes.

ANOTHER PHANTOM HITCHHIKER STORY

By WM. MARION MILLER

The story of the phantom hitch-hiker is so well known that it requires no comment from folklorists. Its recurrence is, however, worthy of note; recently one of my students told me a version of the tale, entirely innocent of the fact that he was relating a well-known story and believing that he was adding something new and startling to my knowledge.

The young man who told me this version of the story comes from Steubenville, Ohio, but the tale itself was laid on a lonely road near Canton in the same state. He had the story from a friend of his own age, who told it as an experience he had personally undergone. Here it is:

On a dark and rainy night, well after midnight, he and a companion (a young man) were driving towards Canton on a deserted highway. Suddenly they saw a comely young woman dressed in white at the side of the road beckoning them to stop. This they did, and when the young woman begged a ride they invited her to enter their coupe and occupy the seat with them.

Strangely enough, she refused and said she would ride in the rumble seat, unprotected though it was. They urged her not to do so, but when she insisted they helped her in and, after inquiring as to where she wanted to get off—a short distance down the road—they drove on. They could not talk to their passenger, cut off by the rear curtain. Apparently they did not even turn around to see if she was still with them as they rode on towards the city.

They soon reached the young woman's destination, stopped, dismounted, and went to help her out of the rear seat. She was gone, and search revealed no trace of her! They were, of course, amazed at this sudden turn of events, but seemingly did not report the affair to city or county authorities. Nor did they enter the house in front of which they had stopped to deposit their passenger. They merely went on their way and counted off their eerie experience as one of "those things."

(For Indiana variants of this nationally known story see *The Hoosier Folklore Bulletin*, II (June, 1943), pp. 2-5. For a thorough study of the vanishing hitchhiker in America see Richard K. Beardsley and Rosalie Hankey, "The Vanishing Hitchhiker," *California Folklore Quarterly*, I (1942), pp. 303-335.—The Editor)

The foregoing story lacks some of the elements of the usual phantom hitch-hiker tale—the visit to the house, the woman's death on her wedding night one year before, etc., but it clearly embodies the accepted motif of the tale. It can best be accepted as just one more appearance of the elusive creature who bobs up ever so often in widely separated areas with more or less regularity.

Miami University

Oxford, Ohio

BJORN WINGER

It is with deep regret that we include this notice of the recent death of Bjorn Winger, a long-time member of the Hoosier Folklore Society, and Vice-President of the Society from 1945 until his death.

A member of a Norwegian family, Mr. Winger was interested especially in Scandanavian folklore. However, he will be best remembered for his excellent comparative study of Eskimo materials.

Ernest W. Baughman.

SUGGESTIONS FOR THE COLLECTOR¹

By HERBERT HALPERT

To collect folktales or other kinds of folklore, two things are necessary: the right attitude and a knowledge of what you are looking for. You must convince your prospective informant that you are sincerely interested in "old-time" stories, songs, or beliefs, and that you realize he knows more about them than you do. The slightest hint of condescension is fatal. If you laugh at what you are told, or from your heights of education contradict him, you are lost. Try to work into an understanding of his attitude. Plain clothes, plain speech, and plain manners—good manners—will help to make an easier relationship.

If you can say that someone he knows told you about him, it will help. Be able to exchange stories, for example, those in this quarterly, but don't know yours too well; perhaps he can tell it the "right" way. Remember you're not showing off your knowledge; you are there to learn. Know plots so that you can stimulate his mind by suggestions. He may not know a story offhand, but suddenly tell it ten minutes later. Don't interrupt. After he has finished, say it's just what you want and ask permission to write it down. Have him repeat it so that you can get it "just right." You may notice that he tells it the second time in a slightly different way. Make a note, if you can, of the differences. And remember to collect the same story as told by different people.

After you have collected your material, try to get in his own words details about when, how, and from whom he learned it, why he likes or remembers it, and how often he tells it. Make a note of his age (sometimes women won't tell you directly, but you can figure it out from other remarks), occupation, kind of home, and note your own impression of the sort of person he is. Remember that one tale with good background material may be more interesting than the fifteenth version of an additional tale.

If possible, tales sent to the Archive of the Hoosier Folklore Society should be typed in double space and with a carbon: each story on a separate sheet. Make sure *your* name and address, and the informant's are on each page. A final word

¹ Reprinted from *The Hoosier Folklore Bulletin*, I (1942), p. 37.

of warning! Do not attempt to edit or rewrite your material in any way even if you see ways of improving it. In this work you are a scientist, not an artist, and are helping to preserve a part of a world-wide tradition.

All this sounds frighteningly formal, but actually it is just a guide to simplify the task for you. Collecting folklore is exciting and delightful. You'll get to meet and know some really remarkable people, and get to know them better than some of your daily casual acquaintances. Good luck!

EDITOR'S REMARKS

By ERNEST W. BAUGHMAN

The publication of this first number of *Hoosier Folklore* is a proud occasion for all of us who have worked with the Hoosier Folklore Society and the *Hoosier Folklore Bulletin*, which this new printed quarterly succeeds. We wish to offer our wholehearted thanks to the Indiana Historical Bureau and to Mr. Howard H. Peckham, its director, for making this publication and its wider distribution possible.

To those of you who have not been readers of the *Hoosier Folklore Bulletin* we say welcome. And we extend an invitation to you to become one of us, to enjoy our quarterly, to attend our meetings, and to send us contributions of the folklore found in your neck of the woods. The collection of folklore is a fascinating pursuit; and you, as well as we, will be richer because of your efforts. Send us your variants of the stories given in this number and in the numbers of its predecessor. For additional details see "Suggestions for the Collector" by Herbert Halpert, reprinted in this issue.

New readers may also be interested in the history of the Society and of its publication. The Hoosier Folklore Society was founded primarily through the efforts of Paul G. Brewster and Robert E. B. Allen in 1937. Since that time it has been an active organization under the leadership of Robert E. B. Allen, Charles F. Vogelín, Stith Thompson, Herbert Halpert, Ernest Baughman, and William Hugh Jansen, who have served as presidents in the order listed. Mrs. Ross Hickam, Mrs. Cecilia H. Hendricks, Paul G. Brewster, Miss Margaret Sweeney, and Dr. May A. Klipple have done valuable work as secretaries and treasurers.

The first number of the *Hoosier Folklore Bulletin* appeared in mimeographed form in June 1942, largely as a result of the efforts of its first editor, Herbert Halpert, who served as editor until 1945 when his military duties made his resignation necessary. The *Bulletin*, published somewhat irregularly at first, became a quarterly in 1944.

The Society is modestly proud of the number and the nature of the folklore materials that have appeared in its *Bulletin*. The folktales of all kinds that have been included make up a larger body than has yet been published from any other state. A surprising number of these tales were from Anglo-American groups who were thought to be almost barren of tale-telling traditions. Songs, games, children's rhymes, cante fables, witchlore and ghostlore, local legends, place names, riddles, proverbs, and modern lore have also appeared in generous amounts.

We hope that you will like the articles in this number. Our natural hope is to produce an outstanding publication. This responsibility rests with our readers and contributors. We hope to print folk materials from many states, from many national and racial groups. And, to paraphrase the words of the first editor of the *Hoosier Folklore Bulletin*: Our hope is that *Hoosier Folklore* will grow in inclusiveness and that in its sphere it will emphasize our democratic pride in an understanding and true appreciation of the many cultural strands that make up the rich pattern of life in these United States.¹

Indiana University

Bloomington, Indiana

¹ Herbert Halpert, "Editor's Report," *Hoosier Folklore Bulletin*, III (1944), p. 72.

MEMBERSHIP IN THE HOOSIER FOLKLORE SOCIETY

Membership in the Hoosier Folklore Society is two dollars a year. This is open to individuals, schools, and libraries anywhere in the United States. Members receive HOOSIER FOLKLORE, a quarterly for the publication of folklore of Indiana and neighboring states. Single copies may be purchased for fifty cents each.

JOINT MEMBERSHIP IN HOOSIER FOLKLORE SOCIETY AND AMERICAN FOLKLORE SOCIETY

Joint membership in the Hoosier Folklore Society and the American Folklore Society is available at a special rate of five dollars a year to Indiana residents and to Indiana schools and libraries. Individual members receive HOOSIER FOLKLORE, THE JOURNAL OF AMERICAN FOLKLORE and MEMOIRS OF THE AMERICAN FOLKLORE SOCIETY as issued.

Institutional members (schools and libraries) receive HOOSIER FOLKLORE and THE JOURNAL OF AMERICAN FOLKLORE.

Membership Dues for 1946 should be mailed promptly to Mrs. Cecilia Hendricks, Treasurer, Hoosier Folklore Society, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana.

Members are urged to secure new members for the society and to contribute manuscripts for publication.

STANDARD ABBREVIATIONS OF PERIODICALS REFERRED TO IN NOTES AND ARTICLES

CFQ =CALIFORNIA FOLKLORE QUARTERLY
HF =HOOSIER FOLKLORE
HFB =HOOSIER FOLKLORE BULLETIN
JAFL =JOURNAL OF AMERICAN FOLKLORE
MAFS=MEMOIRS OF THE AMERICAN FOLKLORE SOCIETY
NYFQ=NEW YORK FOLKLORE QUARTERLY
SFQ =SOUTHERN FOLKLORE QUARTERLY